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A REMARKABLE COLIMA FIGURE

Hunter with duck headdress as decoy, holding spear-thrower and darts. Spout in back of duck. Clay, white on red, polished. Height 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Private collection.
(See Page 72)

SOUTHWEST MUSEUM



Chumash punctate-decorated bone artifacts.

ASPECTS OF CHUMASH PUNCTATE ART

By ROBERT L. HOOVER

PRIMITIVE ART, as an illustrator of myth, religion, and magic, must meet the artistic criteria of its particular culture in proportion, shape, and arrangement of design elements. Each generation of aboriginal craftsmen is trained to follow the ideas of "correct" art and to work within the limits of the culture's artistic conventions. Innovators are only allowed latitude with these conventions if they have already proved themselves to be superior craftsmen. Primitive art is intimately influenced by the world in which the artist lives, so a detailed study of such art should reveal many aspects of his culture.

The Chumash region, roughly encompassing Ven-



Chumash punctate-decorated bone ornaments.

tura, Santa Barbara, and southern San Luis Obispo counties in southern California, represented a prehistoric cultural climax area. A relatively dense coastal population was supported by abundant marine resources and had a highly developed technology which was oriented toward the exploitation of the sea. The Chumash were noted for their frameless plank canoe and art in steatite, which they obtained from Santa Catalina Island for bowls, beads, pipes, and effigies. In the sparsely inhabited interior of the region the Chumash created the most elaborate polychrome pictographic art in the western United States (Landberg 1965).

In 1927 and 1928 Ronald L. Olson conducted archaeological investigations on Santa Cruz Island and the adjacent mainland of the Santa Barbara Channel for the University of California (Olson 1930). The resulting collection, now housed in the Lowie Museum of Anthropology, Berkeley, includes specimens of decorated shell, bone, and stone in great variety. In the analysis of the specimens it was apparent that there were definite cultural patterns which determined the application of design. Shell bead inlay and linear incision

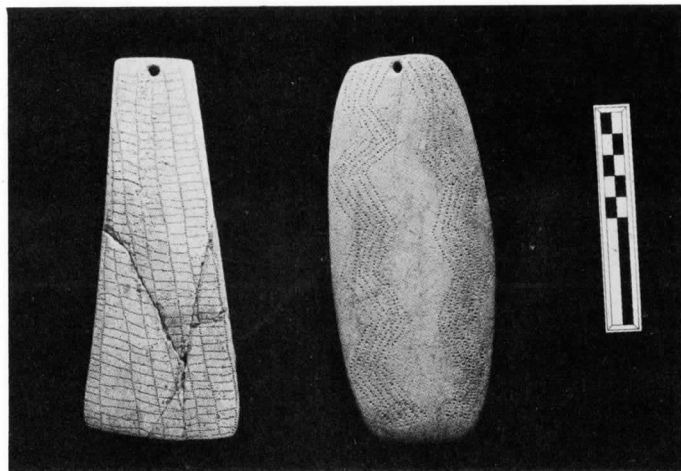
were the dominant forms of decoration on tubular or other three-dimensional objects. Less frequently such objects were undecorated. Flat objects, such as stone plaques or shell and bone pendants, did not usually contain bead inlay but were undecorated or adorned with punctate designs. Olson recovered a variety of punctate Pismo clam shell and whalebone ornaments from a single burial in Site 83 on Santa Cruz Island (Hoover 1973: 127). The punctations were bored into the surface of each object with chert microdrills and powdered red ocher was rubbed into them.

It is possible to analyze prehistoric Chumash attitudes toward the design elements on these punctate objects. The designs were definitely related to the position of the edge perforation which was used for suspension. The presence of such perforations enables one to orient each specimen vertically and to determine the "top" or "bottom" of the design.

Most designs on rectangular ornaments are oriented toward either vertical or horizontal planes and are bilaterally symmetrical. Some circular shell ornaments have a large central perforation in addition to the small suspension hole near the edge. This central perforation was the focus of a radially symmetrical punctate design consisting of concentric circles, radiating connecting lines, and serrated edges.

Both circular and rectangular ornaments normally contained vertical or horizontal rows of punctate triangles or rectangles alternating with undecorated spaces. The Chumash apparently believed in balancing positive (decorated) and negative (undecorated) spaces as one of their artistic conventions. Asymmetrical ornaments contained design elements arranged in an asymmetric manner.

The design elements of stone and bone artifacts in the Olson collection had stylistic parallels in other media. Steatite beads, pipes, bowls, and sculpture were often decorated with shell inlay. In this respect they paralleled the decoration of similarly-shaped bone tubes and tended to contain bilaterally symmetrical designs. There was some repetition of motifs in the Chumash pictographic art, where the radial sunburst, rows of zig-zag lines, triangles, lozenges, and vertical or horizontal rows of checkerboard design all have parallels in the de-



Chumash punctate-decorated bone pendants.

signs on the punctate ornaments (Grant 1965). The heringbone motif was present in pictographs as an incised element on grave markers, and on pendants of shell, stone, and bone. Perhaps it is related to some aspect of the Chumash mortuary cult.

Clearly most Chumash art was non-naturalistic, serving purposes of personal vanity or as symbols of rank and status. The only approach to naturalism appears in certain geometric patterns representing rattlesnakes and mountains in pictographs and in basketry designs (Deetz & Dawson 1965: 220).

This very superficial analysis of Chumash portable art proves that artistic style can best be understood through a knowledge of the cultural matrix from which it is derived. As a corollary, the understanding of Chumash culture can be increased through a knowledge of its art.

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INDIAN SUPERINTENDENTS APPOINTED

Morris Thompson, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, has announced his first two executive appointments since he took office December 3—both Indian. Mrs. Shirley Plume, an Oglala Sioux, will be Superintendent of the Standing Rock Agency, Fort Yates, North Dakota. She is the first Indian woman appointed to such a post. The second executive appointment is Frank Self, Choctaw, who will be Superintendent of the Phoenix Indian School, Phoenix, Arizona.

Other similar appointments to key Bureau of Indian Affairs posts will be forthcoming soon, Thompson said.

ARIZONA TRIBES GET FEDERAL FUNDS

The Arizona governor's office announced not long ago that the Four Corners Regional Commission has granted federal funds totaling nearly \$400,000 to six state projects.

Among these was \$6,200 to the Hualapai Indian Reservation Tribal Council to buy operating equipment for the tribal store complex, and \$4,000 to the Havasupai Indian Tribal Council to permit tribal leaders to take part in off-reservation meetings on economic development.

RIVERSIDE MUSEUM EXHIBITS INDIAN ART

Featuring petroglyphs and pictographs from caves and canyons of southern California, as reproduced by Charles La Monk, Campbell Grant and Gordon Redtfeldt and photographed by the UCSD Art Gallery, the Riverside Municipal Museum, Riverside, California, held a special exhibit entitled "Indian Prehistoric Art" from March 5 through April 7, 1974.

BOOK ON INDIANS REPRINTED

Five thousand copies of "The States and Their Indian Citizens" were sold by the Superintendent of Documents between January and August 1973. Because of the demand, the book has been reprinted and is available once again.

TRIBAL GOVERNMENT TO BE RESTORED

Commissioner of Indian Affairs Morris Thompson recently announced the first in a series of steps that must be undertaken by the nearly 3,000 Menominee Indians of Wisconsin to restore their tribal government which was terminated in 1961.